

RECKLESS RALPH'S

DIY NOVEL ROUND-UP

A monthly magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and literature of the old-time dime and nickel novels, libraries and popular story papers.

Published by Ralph F. Cummings, Box 75, Fisherville, Mass., U. S. A.

Price \$2.00 per year

Ad Rates: 5c per word, 75c per inch, quarter page \$2.00, half page \$3.00, full page \$5.00. Four times for the price of three.

Vol. 17

October 1949

No. 205

MEMOIR OF MAYNE REID

No one who has written books for the young during the present century ever had so large a circle of readers as Captain Mayne Reid, or ever was so well fitted by circumstances to write the books by which he is chiefly known. His life, which was an adventurous one, was ripened with the experience of two Continents, and his temperament which was an ardent one, reflected the traits of two races. Irish by birth, he was American in his sympathies with the people of the New World whose acquaintance he made at an early period, among whom he lived for years, and whose battles he helped to win. He was probably more familiar with the Southern and Western portion of the United States forty years ago than any native-born American of that time. A curious interest attaches to the life of Captain Reid, but it is not of the kind that casual biographers dwell upon. If he had written it himself it would have charmed thousands of readers, who can now merely imagine what it might have been from the glimpses of it which they obtain in his writings. It was not passed in the fierce light of publicity, but in that simple, silent obscurity which is the lot of most men, and is their happiness, if they only knew it.

Briefly related, the life of Captain Reid was as follows: He was born in 1818, in the north of Ireland, the son of a Presbyterian clergyman, who was a type of the class which Goldsmith has described so freshly in the "Deserted Village" and was highly thought of for his labors among the poor of his neighborhood. An earnest, rever-

ent man, to whom his calling was indeed a sacred one, he designed his son Mayne for the ministry, in the hope, no doubt, that he would be his successor. But nature had something to say about that, as well as his good father. He began to study for the ministry, but it was not long before he was drawn in another direction. Always a great reader, his favorite books were descriptions of travel in foreign lands, particularly those which dealt with the scenery, the people, and the resources of America. The spell which these exercised over his imagination, joined to a love of adventure which was inherent in his temperament, and inherited, perhaps with his race, determined his career. At the age of twenty he closed his theological tomes, and girding up his loins with a stout heart he sailed from the shores of the Old World for the New. Following the spirit in his feet he landed at New Orleans, which was probably a more promising field for a young man of his talents than any Northern city, and was speedily engaged in business. The nature of this business is not stated, further than it was that of a trader; but whatever it was it obliged this young Irishman to make long journeys into the interior of the country, which was almost a "terra incognita." Sparsely settled, where settled at all, it was still clothed in primeval verdure—here in the endless reach of savannas, there in the depth of pathless woods, and far away to the North and the West in those monotonous ocean-like levels of land for which the speech of England has no name—the Prairies. Its population was nomadic, not to say barbaric, consisting of tribes of Indi-

ans whose hunting grounds from time immemorial the region was, hunters and trappers, who had turned their backs upon civilization for the free, wild life of nature; men of doubtful or dangerous antecedents, who had found it convenient to leave their country for their country's good; and scattered about hardy pioneer communities from Eastern States, advancing waves of the great sea of emigration which is still drawing the course of empire westward. Travelling in a country like this, and among people like these, Mayne Reid passed five years of his early manhood. He was at home wherever he went, and never more so than when among the Indians of the Red River territory, with whom he spent several months learning their language, studying their customs, and enjoying the wild and beautiful scenery of their camping grounds. Indian for the time, he lived in their lodges, rode with them, hunted with them, and night after night sat by their blazing camp-fires listening to the warlike stories of the braves and the quaint legends of the medicine men. There was that in the blood of Mayne Reid which fitted him to lead this life at this time, and whether he knew it or not it educated his genius as no other life could have done. It familiarized him with a large extent of country in the South and West; it introduced him to men and manners which existed nowhere else; and it revealed to him the secrets of Indian life and character.

There was another side, however, to Mayne Reid than that we have touched upon, and this, at the end of five years, drew him back to the average life of his kind. We find him next in Philadelphia, where he began to contribute stories and sketches of travel to the newspapers and magazines. Philadelphia was then the most literate city in the United States, the one in which a clever writer was at once encouraged and rewarded. Frank and warm-hearted, he made many friends there among journalists and authors. One of these friends was Edgar Allan Poe, whom he often visited at his home in Spring Garden, and concerning whom years after, when he was dead, he wrote with loving tenderness.

The next episode in the career of Mayne Reid was not what one would

expect from a man of letters, though it was just what might have been expected from a man of his temperament and antecedents. It grew out of the time, which was warlike, and it drove him into the army with which the United States speedily crushed the forces of the sister Republic—Mexico. He obtained a commission, and served throughout the war with great bravery and distinction. This stormy episode ended with a severe wound, which he received in storming the heights of Chapultepec—a terrible battle which practically ended the war.

A seconded episode of a similar character, but with a more fortunate conclusion, occurred about four years later. It grew out of another war, which, happily for us, was not on our borders, but in the heart of Europe, where the Hungarian race had risen in insurrection against the hated power of Austria. Their desperate valor in the face of tremendous odds excited the sympathy of the American people, and fired the heart of Captain Mayne Reid, who buckled on his sword once more, and sailed from New York with a body of volunteers to aid the Hungarians in their struggles for independence. They were too late, for hardly had they reached Paris before they learned that all was over. Gorgey had surrendered at Arad, and Hungary was crushed. They were at once dismissed and Captain Reid betook himself to London.

The life of the Mayne Reid in whom we are most interested—Mayne Reid, the author—began at this time, when he was in his thirty-first year, and ended only on the day of his death, October 21, 1883. It covered one-third of a century, and was, when compared with that which had preceded it, uneventful, if not devoid of incident. There is not much that needs be told—not much, indeed, that can be told—in the life of a man of letters like Captain Mayne Reid. It is written in his books. Mayne Reid was one of the best known authors of his time—differing in this from many authors who are popular without being known—and in the walk of fiction which he discovered for himself he is an acknowledged master. His reputation for himself did not depend upon the admiration of the millions of young people who read his books, but upon the

judgment of mature critics, to whom his delineations of adventurous life were literature of no common order. His reputation as a story-teller was widely recognized on the Continent, where he was accepted as an authority in regard to the customs of the pioneers and the guerilla warfare of the Indian tribes, and was warmly praised for his freshness, his novelty, and his hardy originality. The people of France and Germany delighted in this soldier-writer. "There was not a word in his books which a school-boy could not safely read aloud to his mother and sisters." So says a late English critic, to which another adds, that if he has somewhat gone out of fashion of late years, the more's the pity for the school boy of the period. What Defoe is in Robinson Crusoe—realistic idyl of island solitude—that, in his romantic stories of wilderness life, is his great scholar, Captain Mayne Reid.

R. H. Stoddard.

DIME NOVELS AND WHAT THEY DO TO YE

by Nameless Joe

Now fellers, here's where your going to get the low down from an addict who is nearin his maker and I've gone all over this sitshuwation. Fust, when we was Kids, what did they do to us. Many things. Some fellers gloried in the idee thar was nuthin left but to leave Momma and Poppa and go out and shoot Injuns. Then thar was them what wanted to go to college and beat anything Frank Merriwell did. Then there was them that wanted to be great railroad engineers, the kind that could finally become the owner of the durn company. Another bunch of galoots wanted to become firemen, save beautiful maidens like Young Wide Awake, and dragging out all kindsa females, tha heck with the men folks they could bask in the glory of thunderous cheers from them what was too timid to penetrate into the burning embers. I know when I was just past the bottle wit a nibble my ambition was to go to the Klondike and take up where the Great Unknown left off. The great Unknown as ye mabe recomember was Young Klondike's right arm. My pappy stoped that notion. Then came the great Wall St. idee. Sure, I could go down

there with thirty cents, all I hadda do was listen in on some stock brokers, mabe save a few millionaires from fallin under a carriage that was running away, or his daughter was about to be scrambled into mince meat before plunging race hawes, and right away my fortune was made. Yehr, all ye hadda do was go out and do it.

When Young Glory and Yankee Doodle did their stuff during the Spanish American War, them was the days I also had idees. What I could do, if given the chance with Momma and Poppa out of the way, well Admiral Dewey just would never have been mentioned.

Now Pluck and Luck gave us palookas plenty of territory. What ever your trend of thought was, Pluck and Luck gave you the old come on. You could either stay at home and be a hero, or you could travel to the ends of the earth, and step off to a planet or sumthin, there was no limit to what your ambitions could arrive at.

This was proven by what Frank Reade and Jack Wright did. I had many idees on inventions that would far outdo what them thar has beens did, but never had the money nor the brains to try it. My main worry was, how to get a Dutchman and Darky, and a sailor like Tim to go along with me. Suppose I had made a wonderful airship, and didn't have those fellers along, and up came an adventure where no one could save me, I'd be in a heck of a spot. The author jest couldn't go on with the story. Result, you fellers wouldn't buy the next issue cause there I was, dead as a door mat. Looka all the nickels Tousey would lose jest cause I was outta the picture. Nope, I hadda give up the idee.

My next idee was to mabe be a Fred Fearnot. True he made lotsa money, if ye don't believe it, just read the later issues. There I was stumped again. The wonderful beautiful gals he had on his tail alla time jest wouldn't give me a second glance. The fust one would kill what ever chance there was. Not only that, suppose I had everything he had, now suppose, all the friends he had, every one who could out shoot, outsmart anybody else, now suppose I couldn't make up a pot of coffee. No matter where the guy went, nobody jest didn't know nuthin, all he did was pot a potta water on to

boil, and presto, no matter if it was the old Lion Brand for ten cents a pound, no one ever tasted a cuppa coffee like that. Wadda guy, wadda author.

Well anyway fellers we sure do have plenty memories of them thar swell days. Today we look back and wonder how we could ever have read em. Still to look them over does give one a thrill and brings back what hath gohe and what we have to face. Today tis realites, and if we still have the gumption to face em, unpleasant as many of em are, still we can glory in what was and try to make what is as pleasant as what is. And its nuttin to go hay wire about.

See ye in some future issue,—I hope.

NEWSY NEWS

by Ralph F. Cummings

Ye editor Cummings was invited down to Philadelphia, Pa., to the great American Legion Parade, by Mr. and Mrs. Tilman and Edward Le Blanc of Fall River, and Americas Vano of Bristol, R. I., on Aug. 29th to 31st. We were tired when we got down there, and tired when we got back, for it rained both ways, but Tuesday, the day of the great parade, was a nice day, thank the good Lord for it. We didn't have much time in Phila, but we did visit Frank Frey, Ed Leithead and Bob Smeltzer, and would have visited others if we had had the time, but Sept. 1st Mr. Vano had to go on police duty at 1 P.M. and I had to be on Rose Steeles sweep at Milford, Mass., at 8 P.M. to put the Ogneta tribe Degree of Pocahontas in office. So as every one we didn't get a chance to call on, we'll try to make it up next time.

Has any one ever seen the Home Monthly, put out by Beadle & Adams before Maleaska? and published at Buffalo, N. Y.? Now's a chance to get a copy for your collection of Beadles. Price \$1.00 each, and well worth it, too. All in good condition, for 1857-58. Hurry.

Sept. 18, Sunday, Tilman & Edward Le Blanc invited Eli Messier and myself to go visit Don Learnard of Arlington. We went, and we all enjoyed the visit. We had a very nice time, and talks on the old novels, and looking over Don's treasures, too. And Sep.

24th Frank Wilson was down to see me from Melrose, Mass. and met Clyde Wakefield here. Frank and I did some trading.

Sept. 23rd I was on Tommy Funderburks and Frank Henrys sweep of the Improved Order of Redmen, as we went down to Southbridge, Mass., to put the fellow Redmen in office down there. We were all dressed in tux trousers, white shirts, ties hand painted with Indian head and peace pipe and tribe number on them, and black shoes. There were 14 of us. They were, in case any one is interested, and in order as follows. Tom Funderburk, Frank Henry, Paul Veselto, Henry La Tour, Bart Toune, Mr. McIntyre, Walter Browne, Robert Lake, Ernie Rowl, Myself, Edward Jacobsen, Jim Econimius, Wm. Yeates and Le Barge. So if any one wants any scalps lifted, let us know.

Harry, of Tom, Dick and Harry was a New York pugilist known as the Jersey Pet.

Frances Forrest was a stock name.

Police Captain Howard was also a stock name.

Orrin G. Welch was used by Howard de Vere (Van Orden).

George G. Small wrote under the names of Tom Teaser, Peter Pad, Bricktop and others. He was a red haired man.

If it's books you want, why not write to Irven N. Arnold, Route 1, Hopedale, Ohio, he has 'em.

Roy E. Morris says Sept. 10th he listened to a broadcast from Northfield, Minn. It was Jesse James Day. Some of the residents, re-enacted the famous bank robbery of Sept. 10th, 1876. Many of the buildings, including the bank building are still standing. The announcer gave the story, and mentioned the Canon river, which the raiders crossed so long ago, when entering the town. Northfield is only a short distance north of here, Henrietta and I were there last summer. You can still see the bullet holes in the bank walls.

I have just got in a fresh batch of old newspapers of long long ago, for sale at 12 for \$1.00 all in good condition, what are you interested in? Historical, Circus, Sports, Minstrel, Fighting and Wrestling, Fairs, Time Tables of Railroads and Stage Coaches, plays, Operas, Vaudeville and what not. I may have it, also all kinds of

old farm magazines and papers. Just write ye editor Cummings about the above.

Col. Charles D. Randolph, 2316 Jefferson Ave., Davenport, Iowa, will pay 10c each for Original Buffalo Bill Library, 2d.

Wallace H. Waldrop says, Mr. Ralston, Vice-President of Street and Smith, has just informed him that they were compelled to destroy all the book and novel plates due to Government regulations. Can't understand why they should do this.

St. Elmo, by Augusta J. Evans, is back in print again, gotten out by Grosset & Dunlop, even tho it's a love story, it's a start any way.

James Martin of San Francisco, Calif., has gone to work up in the lumber regions.

Bill Gander of Transcona, Man., Canada, sent in a copy of the Bat Man Comics No. 54 for Sept. 1949. It mentions an article on the Treasure Hunter, where he comes across some of the old dime novels, such as Deadwood Dan Jr., Perseverance, Top Elite Weekly and others.

Ye editor just landed a real rare old timer, No. 1 of Irwin P. Beadle's American Novels. Title—The Ocean Pearl. A tale of the Tropics, by Lieut. Henry R. Shipley 1865, and I've just found that page numbers 51 to 54 are missing, otherwise in extra good condition. Thought I had something real for my collection.

Danny Bundza, 27 Hacker St., Worcester 3, Mass., H. H. B. member No. 153 has just been married a short time ago, and is one of the happiest fellows in 16 states.

I have over £100 to my "credit" in Britain, which I cannot get due to regulations. Want price lists on books (old) or dime novels from dealers or collectors in that country who will sell and ship for pounds instead of dollars.

Other business propositions considered.

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RALPH F. CUMMINGS

Fisherville, Mass.

If it's books, novels, story papers or what, write to Eli Messier, P. O. Box 1122, Woonsocket, R. I.

HOW ABOUT BOOKS FELLOWS,

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20. Robert Frye, 895 Morgan Ave., Schenectady 8, N. Y.
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42. H. L. (Buck) Wilson, RFD No. 1, Alliance, Ohio
93. Peter W. Seiter, 825 Ramona Rd., Wilmette, Ill. (new address)
111. Charles J. Duprez, Bellerose, L. I., N. Y.
150. Richard E. Stolt, 1906 W. Bellaine Ave., Chicago 13, Ill. (new address)
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Ralph F. Cummings

Fisherville, Mass.



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